

## SOME BIRDS OF CHITTAGONG.

BY

MAJOR R. S. P. BATES, M.B.O.U.

I was in Chittagong from March 5th for exactly three months. Owing to 'terrorist' activities one's movements were somewhat restricted, so the following list is by no means complete. I never got down to the sea-shore which is difficult to reach owing to lack of roads, and in fact with but one or two exceptions all the birds in the list were seen within three miles of my bungalow.

The residential station of Chittagong is built on a series of small pimples up to a couple of hundred feet in height, the end of a low narrow range running northwards parallel to the coast with a wide cultivated plain between it and the Chittagong Hill Tracts which do not concern us here at all. As one gets away from the station, these hills become more and more thickly wooded and the height gradually increases. The maze of narrow long winding nullahs between the wooded hills contains very varied types of country from grass and scanty cultivation to thick bush, and reeds, and canes, into which it is almost impossible to penetrate. Clearings and old tea gardens are also to be met with. This part of the district naturally contains a very varied and interesting avifauna. The flat cultivated areas away from these hills contain little out of the ordinary.

(8) *Corvus leuillanti andamanensis*. Andaman Jungle-Crow. The stout bill is a very noticeable feature of this crow.

(11) *Corvus splendens splendens*. The House Crow of Chittagong is a very dark bird but is apparently 'splendens'.

*Dendrocitta rufa*. Tree-Pie. Common. A pair in our garden had a young one (I never saw more than one) out of the nest on May 22nd.

(120) *Dryonastes ruficollis*. Rufous-necked Laughing-Thrush. Saw two pairs in the thickets and long grass at the edge of one of the long winding nullahs. One shot on May 26th proved to be a female whose organs were undeveloped. Besides other notes they have a very pleasant three-noted whistle.

*Timalia pileata*. Red-capped Babbler. A common bird in the hilly tracts. The testes of a male shot on April 12th were slightly enlarged. This bird has some harsh notes which I could not distinguish from the 'korkueh' of the Indian Great Reed-Warbler which is such a feature of every reed patch in Kashmir. Until I had actually run one of the birds to earth producing these notes in a reedy patch near some cultivation, I was convinced that a Reed-Warbler must reside in Chittagong. They have also quite a flute-like little descending trill of about half a dozen notes, a most pleasing effort.

*Pellorneum ruficeps*. A Spotted Babbler was by no means uncommon on the bush-covered hillsides, chiefly where the higher trees were few and the scrub fairly thick. A pair were often heard in an old tea garden just close to our bungalow. The only one I managed to shoot was unfortunately blown almost to pieces. This was on April 14th. It was a breeding male. The outer webs of the feathers of the sides of the neck and hind neck were more a very dark brown than blackish and the spots on the breast also dark

brown, but on the whole it appeared to me to agree with the description of *mandellii*.

(283) *Mixornis gularis rubricapilla*. Assam Yellow-breasted Babbler. Shot a male out of a party in very thick scrub jungle in the hills on May 13th. The testes were greatly enlarged.

(362) *Aegithina tiphia tiphia*. Common Iora.

(403) *Molpastes cafer*. Red-vented Bulbul. Common. A very dark bird generally, so presumably *bengalensis* but I collected no specimens. Nor did I look for nests but came on one with three eggs in the crown of a small palm on a roadside on April 12th. Two days later it had been destroyed.

*Otocompsa jocosa*. Red-Whiskered Bulbul. Common from the outskirts of the station, being slightly more of a jungle bird than the Red-vented Bulbul. Took a nest of three eggs at the Foy Scheme (waterworks) on April 14th and noted numbers of young about shortly after that date. The nest in question was built into a mass of fallen leaves caught up in a bush about three feet from the ground.

(442) *Brachypodius cinereiventris*. Grey-bellied Bulbul. Two bulbuls of this genus were disturbed in a very damp heavily wooded nullah some three miles outside the station on May 20th. One of them obligingly perched quite close to me for a few moments. It was a grey-bellied bird.

(495) *Saxicola torquata*. Bush-Chat. Not very common when we first arrived. They soon disappeared.

(532) *Phoenicurus ochruros rufiventris*. Eastern Indian Redstart. One or two seen in March on passage, the last being recorded on the 17th.

(558) *Copsychus saularis saularis*. Magpie Robin. Common and breeding freely in March, April and May. Young birds seen in the nest on May 2nd in a Woodpecker's old nesting hole and again on May 18th.

*Monticola solitaria*. Blue Rock-Thrush. One frequented our compound until April 8th. A number were seen on passage about this time.

(639) *Siphia parva albicilla*. Eastern Red-breasted Flycatcher. Common, leaving about the third week of April.

(693) *Hypothymis azurea styani*. Northern Indian Black-naped Flycatcher. Shot a male in thick low mixed jungle on May 13th; organs considerably enlarged. They were not common.

(719) *Lanius cristatus cristatus*. Brown Shrike. Common and still much in evidence when we left in early June.

(729) *Tephrodornis pondiceriana pondiceriana*. Indian Common Wood-Shrike.

(763) *Artamus fuscus*. Ashy Swallow-Shrike. One only seen cruising round our bungalow on May 20th.

(767) *Dicrurus macrocercus albirictus*. Himalayan Black Drongo. Common. Noticed building operations in progress in a fork of a tall mim tree at the Turtle Tank on April 10th. On April 29th saw two young out of the nest being fed by their parents.

(814) *Orthotomus sutorius patia*. Burmese Tailor-Bird.

(940) *Prinia inornata*. Wren-Warbler. Not particularly common but to be met with on most of the sun-grass covered hillsides. A male and female shot on April 12th had the organs only slightly developed.

(958) *Oriolus xanthornus xanthornus*. Indian Black-headed Oriole. Common.

(964) *Gracula religiosa intermedia*. Indian Grackle. I often saw a pair of these birds in a neglected tea garden in the low hills about three miles north of Chittagong.

(969) *Lamprocorax panayensis affinis*. Tipperah Glossy Stare. Shot an immature bird on May 27th out of a flock of four containing one adult. They were feeding in some tall trees in my compound. The iris was a yellowish red.

- (982) *Sturnia malabarica malabarica*. Grey-headed Myna. Common.
- (996) *Acridotheres tristis tristis*. Common Myna. Common.
- (999) *Aethiopsar fuscus fuscus*. Indian Jungle Myna.
- (1004) *Sturnopastor contra contra*. Indian Pied Myna. First noticed building operations on April 11th from which date they were nesting freely.
- (1010) *Ploceus atrigula atrigula*. Eastern Baya. This Weaver does not wait for the commencement of the rains in the Chittagong District before commencing to breed. I noted one colony on April 21st which must have been building for some days, and during the next couple of weeks noted numbers commencing operations. Fairly tall palms were most in demand, but I saw two colonies on low leafy trees.
- (1020) *Munia atricapilla rubronigra*. Northern Chestnut-bellied Munia. Common both in the cultivated areas and in the jungle. Often seen in quite large flocks, sometimes high up in tall trees, sometimes in the long grass and swampy places. The only nest I noticed was being built in a thorny bush close to a path running through quite thick jungle; date May 13th, but a few days previously I saw one picking up grass in my own compound.
- (1097) *Passer domesticus nigricollis*. Burmese House-Sparrow.
- (1148) *Riparia paludicola brevicaudata*. Indian Sand Martin.
- (1186) *Anthus hodgsoni hodgsoni*. Indian Tree Pipit. There was a sudden influx of these birds on March 12th on passage which lasted to the end of the month.
- (1195) *Anthus richardi rufulus*. Indian Pipit.
- (1215) *Alauda gulgula gulgula*. Small Indian Skylark.
- (1245) *Eremopteryx grisea grisea*. Ashy-crowned Finch Lark. By no means common.
- (1250) *Zosterops palpebrosa cacharensis*. Cachar White-Eye.
- (1279) *Leptocoma asiatica intermedia*. Burmese Purple Sunbird. Sunbirds were really quite uncommon. The only nest found was on May 26th. The female was sitting on two fresh eggs. The nest was overhanging a small much jungle-covered stream running out of one of the numerous small nullahs through some rice cultivation. It resembled most remarkably the flotsam caught up in flood time on all the canes and brambles around.
- (1297) *Dicaeum cruentatum cruentatum*. Indian Scarlet-backed Flower-Pecker. A very common and familiar bird, both in the gardens and out in the jungle.
- (1353) *Chrysophlegma flavinucha flavinucha*. Large Yellow-naped Woodpecker. Saw a pair in fairly thick jungle in the low hills two miles out on May 13th. In the setting sun their crests appeared lemon yellow and stood out fanwise from the head.
- (1368) *Dryobates macei*. Fulvous-breasted Pied Woodpecker. Seen two or three times in the jungles bordering the Foy Scheme dam.
- (1394) *Brachypternus benghalensis*. Golden-backed Woodpecker. Common. A pair of these birds were boring a hole in a tree close to a Railway official's bungalow in Chittagong on April 23rd. On its completion however a pair of Common Mynas took possession.
- (1432) *Thereiceryx lineatus hodgsoni*. Assam Lineated Barbet. Not very common in the station.
- (1436) *Cyanops asiatica asiatica*. Blue-throated Barbet. Only seen in the jungle-covered low hills such as at the Foy Scheme.
- (1446) *Xantholæma haemacephala indica*. Burmese Crimson-breasted Barbet. Somewhat scarce.
- Cuculus canorus*. A Cuckoo of this species was heard calling in a railway bungalow compound on April 23rd.

(1456) *Cuculus micropterus micropterus*. Indian Cuckoo. Excessively common. They started calling in the second week of March.

*Eudynamis scolopaceus*. Koel.

(1479) *Rhopodytes tristis tristis*. Large Himalayan Green-billed Malkoha. I remarked this bird in the better wooded patches concealing the villages in the cultivated areas as well as in thicker jungle along the hills.

(1489) *Taccocua leschenaulti affinis*. Bengal Sirkeer Cuckoo.

(1491) *Centropus sinensis intermedius*. Hume's Crow-Pheasant. The chuckling laugh is much more frequently indulged in than the hooting note.

(1508) *Psittacula alexandri fasciata*. Indian Red-breasted Paroquet. This very noisy bird is the common Paroquet of Chittagong. Two pairs were noted nesting in holes in casuarinas in the station in April.

(1513) *Coryllis vernalis vernalis*. Indian Loriquet. Common.

(1519) *Coracias benghalensis affinis*. Burmese Roller. Quite common on our arrival in March, but all had disappeared before the month was out.

*Merops orientalis*. Green Bee-Eater.

(1526) *Merops superciliosus javanicus*. Blue-tailed Bee-Eater. Very common and breeding freely in April and May. An enormous colony, which must have numbered a hundred pairs, was nesting in the face of a sandy cliff close to Sholashahr Railway Station, a suburb of Chittagong.

(1533) *Alcedo atthis bengalensis*. Common Indian Kingfisher. Not very common. -This was the only Kingfisher I ever saw along the streams, which were not suitable for the Pied Kingfisher. The main river and its tributaries are tidal for many miles inland, and on the only two occasions I went up by launch I saw no Kingfishers of any kind.

(1551) *Halcyon smyrnensis fusca*. Indian White-breasted Kingfisher. Common in the station and breeding freely in April and May.

*Upupa epops*. There is no resident Hoopoe in Chittagong. I saw three or four (probably *saturata*) soon after our arrival i.e. between March 5th and 17th but none after the latter date.

(1599) *Micropus affinis subfuscatus*. Malay House-Swift.

(1600) *Cypsiurus batasiensis batasiensis*. Bengal Palm-Swift.

(1661) *Bubo coromandus coromandus*. Dusky Horned Owl. Common. Their rumbling calls were to be heard in the evenings from every suitable clump of trees. We had a pair in our own compound. In Rajputana these birds called mainly in the rains and breeding season but they were calling all the time we were in Chittagong.

(1684) *Athene brama indica*. Northern Spotted Owlet. Rather uncommon. In fact I only heard them at a small village a mile or so north of Chittagong.

(1689) *Glaucidium cuculoides rufescens*. Burmese Barred Owlet. The common Owl of Chittagong. We had two pairs in our compound on the outskirts.

(1706) *Sarcogyps calvus*. Black Vulture. Quite common.

(1711) *Gyps indicus nudiceps*. Northern Long-billed Vulture. Common.

(1713) *Pseudogyps bengalensis*. Indian White-backed Vulture.

(1730) *Falco chiquera chiquera*. Red-headed Merlin. This bird was quite common in Mymensingh but I only saw it occasionally at Chittagong.

(1780) *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*. Large Grey-headed Fishing-Eagle.

(1784) *Haliastur indus indus*. Brahminy Kite.

(1788) *Milvus migrans govinda*. Common Pariah Kite.

(1792) *Circus cyaneus cyaneus*. Hen-Harrier. The Harriers had mostly left when we arrived in Chittagong, but I saw one Hen-Harrier, a late straggler,



on May 1st. The Pied Harrier, still common when we left Mymensingh, was never seen, and the next bird too only a couple of times.

(1794) *Circus aeruginosus aeruginosus*. Marsh Harrier. Last seen on May 2nd.

(1819) *Pernis ptilorhynchus ruficollis*. Indian Crested Honey-Buzzard. Comparatively common. A pair were always hanging about our compound, making their presence known by a high-pitched trisyllabic squeal uttered frequently when on the wing. On one occasion as I drove up to the bungalow, I nearly ran into one as I came over the crest of the hill. It was on the ground busy devouring termites. When the winged swarms appeared they were always much in evidence along with the Common and Brahminy Kites, Mynas and Crows, wheeling to and fro screaming continuously.

(1826) *Crocopus phoenicopterus viridifrons*. Burmese Green Pigeon. Building in March.

(1856) *Columbia livia intermedia*. Indian Blue Rock-Pigeon.

(1874) *Streptopelia chinensis tigrina*. Burmese Spotted Dove. Exceedingly common.

(1900) *Polyplectron bicalcaratum bicalcaratum*. Burmese Peacock-Pheasant.

(1903) *Gallus bankiva murghi*. Common Red Jungle-Fowl. Fairly common all along the hills from the commencement of the forests at the Foy Scheme.

(1921) *Gennaeus horsfieldii horsfieldii*. Black-breasted Kalij Pheasant.

(1997) *Turnix suscitator plumbipes*. Burmese Bustard-Quail.

(2022) *Amaurornis phoenicurus chinensis*. Chinese White-breasted Water-hen. Common.

(2031) *Metopodius indicus*. Bronze-winged Jacana. Very common. Every tank sufficiently weedy had at least one pair.

(2127) *Lobivanellus indicus atronuchalis*. Burmese Red-wattled Lapwing. Only seen once on May 2nd.

(2143) *Tringa ochropus*. Green Sandpiper.

(2145) *Tringa hypoleucos*. Common Sandpiper.

(2150) *Glottis nebularia*. Greenshank.

(2170) *Capella gallinago gallinago*. Fantail Snipe.

(2173) *Capella stenura*. Pintail Snipe.

(2183) *Anhinga melanogaster*. Indian Darter.

(2218) *Ardea cinerea rectirostris*. Eastern Grey Heron.

(2225) *Egretta garzetta garzetta*. Little Egret.

(2226) *Bubulcus ibis coromandus*. Cattle Egret. Noted to be in breeding plumage on May 2nd.

(2229) *Ardeola grayii*. Indian Pond Heron.

(2237) *Ixobrychus sinensis sinensis*. Yellow Bittern.

(2238) *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*. Chestnut Bittern. A male shot on May 24th had the testes the size of pea-nuts. It had a slightly digested whole frog in its stomach.

(2292) *Podiceps ruficollis capensis*. Indian Little Grebe.